27 June 1965

Dear Family,

I've been trying to call you this weekend and presume you are at the desert, or galavanting around. I hope you are getting a little enjoyment out of a well-earned vacation. At any rate, HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, for yesterday. And best wishes for many more years of conubial bliss in the years to come.

How are you, Papa? Goodly, I hope, and feeling your beans. The reports are encouraging, that you are getting back your appetite, walking around. But no Bandy yet. You have to take it easy for a while, just relax and enjoy your vacation. I'm sorry to be such a lousy writer, but I am thinking of yoy muchly.

And the news on Dare is also good. Thanks for forwarding the letter from Liz.

I had Wednesday off, add1 then half of Saturday and all of Sunday off. What a breeze. But since last Friday, I put in a 75 hour week, a good deal of wrk! These ten-our days really get to you. I'm so used to getting up at 4:45 that I slept late this morning, until 6. I tried phoning you at 7:30, went to 8 o'clock church, which seemed so late.

The work is no longer physically difficult. I'm not very fast yet, but not too much below average. The 40 lbs ladders, which were the worst thing at first, no longer bother me too much. And I have done a good deal of swamping, stacking the filled boxes on the trucks. In peaches, it is quite easy, since the boxes only weigh about 35 lbs. and are only piled 8 high, about 5'-6'. In plums, the boxes are 45 lbs. and are piled 10 high, well over my head. Twenty minutes of that and you're dead. But the picking is now just booring, not too strenuous. I'm not that tired at night. We always take a nick swim in a glacial river (St. John's, I think), which is cleansing and very refreshing. Then we get home about 6:30-7 for dinner. The last few days, we haven't been doing too much at night. Butit feels like we've been here for months, not less than two weeks.

The conditions is the field, at least on the surface, are not that bad, though if I write to Marty, I'll try to make them sound worse. There are no toilets, but this is not too much of a hardship on the boys. And on Friday I worked with an almost all girl crew which didn't seem to have any complaints. Children down to 15 work. The work is not too tiring after one is used to it, though we have been lucky in the weather so far. It has not yet been over 100. When it gets really hot, I expect the fields are pretty bad. But when one looks beyond a single day's work, one sees the real implications of the situation. Even a ten-hour day only brings in $12.50, and the work is not regular. We worked straight through my first weekend. But on Thurs, Friday, and Saturday, I worked for a different crew every day. Each one was laid off at then end of the day, with no explanation, no warning, no help in finding new jobs, and no indication about when work might resume. Maybe a day or two, maybe a week or month.

On irregular work like this, it is very hard to save. So one sees old men of about 70 still climbing the ladders and filling their buckets. One old guy in my first crew must have been almost 70, didn't speak a dozen words all day, wore the same clothes every day. He was just so tired and resigned. Yet he will soon be too old for even that. No money in the bank, no family to provide for him.

It is also depressing to see the young people, 15-25, who have quit school, are settling down into this as a career. Some are bright. But their families pressure them to quit school, reasoning, I presume, that you didn't need much education for farm work. And they never consider anything else.

One can't really earn a living at this, and there is almost no hope to rise. And the housing is so horrible it is unbelievable. Redbanks has a ghetto for its workers that is really horrible. Redbanks ("Old Mission" Santa Rosa Plums and Peaches) is one of the biggest companies in the valley. It's a multi-million dollar corporation and there is no excuse for not building nice houses. When both the parents work, they often take their small children to the fields with them, leave them in the car all day, or let them wander around. One thing we hope to do, if we ever get a house in

the right part of town, we hope to dset up a child-care center, a kind of day nursurry. We thought for a while we might move into Linelle Camp, a Tulare County ghetto camp in Farmersville, owned by the county. It was built in the 1930's and hasn't been appreciable changed since. A Hooversville, with horrible roads, unpaved, dingy shacks, leakky roofs, loose doors, no privacy. They are one-room affairs, with stove and icebox extra. A group connected with the AfS is trying to organize a rent strick out there, to force the county to clean up conditions. We will probably help in some capacity or another.

Our main project now seems to be to get a little house in the barrio of North Visalia, a 90% Mexican-American area. While we continue to work in the fields (we hope, though we seem to be entering what is called "Little Winter") others will stay home and organize a childrens center and meet people and learn real conditions and conmplaints. The other goroup of Cal kids, over in Woodlake has a more ambitions and political project going, to register voters and take over city government in the next April elections. I just get worried that this group will procrastinate and fritter away the whole summer. We get very patronizing about the Woodlake group, but at least they are doing something, have a goal to head for. We haven't even reached that point yet. Any community development is going to be a long, hard road, with very little in specific, tangeable accomplishments at first. But a a personal approach, from the ground up, is the best technique, I think.

Robin, you would be dazzled by the cars here. So bitching...Zowie. At least, if you want the bodies and lost of original four=cylineder (non-running) engins. But these Okies are funny about selling, may hold on to a car for sentimental reasons, but leave it out in the fields to be vandalized and rust away. If you do come up, you'll need a trailor to bring back all the carcassasses. How would you like a Durant Star Six?

The group itself is leaderless, community decision making, which makes for wasted time and procrastination. They are mostly rich kikes, Marxists and mixed up. One Chinese guy, a high school senior who is very immateur, going through an ultra-rebellion against his parents, just can't say a nice word about the institution of family, is kind of skrewed up. A car addict and teenager. Two very cute girls, neither of whom like me much. One very quiet nice married and bearded intellectual type, and one intense, idealistic, rather garbled type. None as mixed up as I am. Two others left. One Chinese boy (they were cousins) wanted more action (as I do) and another Yid got mxxrxedx drafted. The two weeks so far have been worth a whole summer of experience, a real eye opener. But I do hope we can get a project going a little better. I may hitchhike home in a week or two.

Much love to all
DIII